LSB 664.10.11

No. Raynham Dec. 24, 1895.

W. Brewster Esq.

My dear Sir:-

Having been unexpectedly called home on account of a law suit, I brought what skins I could in my trunk.

I note what you say about wishing water birds from the Pacific Coast, and hope to be able to supply you with some, and think I can have the "make up" to suit you if you will tell me just how you wish them made.

When water fowl are very fat it is almost impossible to help having grease show through, although I

cut all fat off that I can, then scrape thoroughly, and then rub all I possibly can out with sawdust.

I find that when I mount a bird that is greasy it goes up in much clearer condition than the skins look.

Do not recollect of ever having relaxed any water birds skins, but if you wish skins to mount I would like you to experiment with some of these, and if they are not satisfactory you are very welcome to same.

You speak of "reasonable prices" — I am not posted in prices of skins, and shall leave that to you.

I only know that Mr. Loomis who was collecting in a large way from Monterey, just across the mouth of the bay from me last Winter considered Black footed Shearwaters quite valuable, and my boys and I have rowed hundreds

of miles I should think, during the last few months, to get within gun shot of these birds, not because the birds are rare, for they go in immense flocks, but they are very hard to approach; but think I have finally got onto them when the weather conditions are right — that is to let the boat lie in the trough of heavy seas — but unfortunately I am not a good sailor.

I send you by Express a small box containing 1 Petrel, 1 Auk and 1 small Murrylette in the larger box, also 1 Shearwater, 4 Terns, 1 Auk, 1 Tern, large, 5 Marbled Murrylettes 1 Bonaparte Gull, 3 Grebe, 6 Hermans Gulls, and 6 Black Footed Shearwaters. Some of these are the only specimens I

Towne - E. B.

Dec. 24, 1895.

have of that specimen, and would like to have you identify them — the albino you may send to your friend Mr. Dean if you care to take the trouble, the Petrel I suppose to be Ashy - the big Shearwater sooty, the Auk hornbilled, and the big tern Caspian or Royal. The small Murgyletto I dont know.

Of course I expect to be able to get more of the most of these, although I am told the Petrel is the only one known to have been taken in Monterey Bay, and I will tell you the conditions under which I killed this with two others some day when I see you, as I hope I shall, for I expect to be here about for several weeks.

Have a large number of land birds skins — is there anything in particular you would like?

Very Respectfully Yours,

E. B. Towne.

77 Ocean View Avenue,

East Santa Cruz, Cal. May 6, 1896.

Wm. Brewster Esq.,
Cambridge Mass.,

My dear Sir:—

Your of Jan. 21, was received by me here a few days after my return, and should have answered it before, but have taken little to write about for this reason — Salmon commenced running here early in February and have been here in the Bay ever since, from a few dozen to several hundred being caught every day, and consequently it is impossible to hire a boat at a reasonable price, five dollars being the price charged for taking one or more out salmon fishing, and the fishermen will not let their boat until too late in the day to expect a fishing party: but think I

6 May 91

will buy a boat for the boys as soon as their vacation commences — we have three boys attending the public schools here, two of which shoot and make up skins; also two little daughters.

The boys are very much pleased with the skins I got in exchange from you, but the oldest fellow, Bancroft is very much exercised because you allowed the same price in trade for the Murelets and the Shearwaters, and thinks you cheated yourself in making these prices, because in other exchanges he has gotten more than twice as much for the Shearwater as for the Murelets; and I also consider the last named bird much easier to get, although neither are common here.

I have found two nests that are models of bird architecture, a East Tit and set of seven eggs and Water Ouzel — but unfortunately the last named contained three young and one egg; and I am going to try to get a photograph of the nest, and think it will

interest you. By the way - I have wished many times since we have been in this State that we had a camera and the oldest boy is very anxious for one as an acquaintance of his whom he collected a good deal with in San Diego Co. last year had one and he thinks he understands the whole process to the finished picture.
As you have a knowledge of these matters will you kindly tell me what sort of a camera you would recommend, one that is of simple construction, moderate expense and that can be carried in the field on collecting expeditions.
I am in your debt $3.10 on last exchange, and expect to get things you would like when we get our boat.
Can let you have one or two sets Allens Hummingbirds, also pair birds if you would like, have two very handsome nests, made of bark, blossoms and mosses of different colors. Very sincerely, E. Towne

Towne - E. B.,
May 6th. 1896.

East Santa Cruz, Calif. - Mch. 11, 1897.

Wm. Brewster Esq.,
Cambridge Mass.

My dear Sir:-

I wish to thank you for answering my numerous questions in your last. Although we have made up a good many skins of land birds during the last year it does not seem to me that we have accomplished much in sea birds. I have about a dozen good skins of each of the following - Marbled Murrelets varying from very dark to almost white breasts, Blk. footed Shearwaters, Dark Bodied Shearwaters, a few Jagers and Fulmers and one very fine Pink Footed Shearwater to dispose of,

Do you care for any of them?
As it is probable we shall go East in the Fall, I dislike to leave the state without killing a Cal. Vulture, and although I have been hunting for this bird for more than two years all the way from the Northern part of Mexico, having spent a year in San Diego Co. and been on several extended camping trips where we killed deer and other animals to bait them, having been assured before outfitting that we would surely get Vultures, I have yet to see a living bird.
Having made the acquaintance of a prospector who has had many years experience and acquaintance in the sheep and cattle raising Counties of state who tells me he knows where

there are still a few birds over toward Death Valley in San Bernardino Co and assures me he will get a pair or more skins for me if I will grub stake him for sixty days and furnish pack animals. Now mules, beans, bacon and coffee are cheap in this country and I think I will make this last attempt. As they are so big and bulky I wish to keep but one skin, and as you have the only specimens I have seen in a private collection I write to ask you your opinion as to their value, which I know nothing of except that while collecting with A. W. Anthony two years ago he told me of the British Museum having purchased a skin at a large price. These birds are like

the buffalo except that man killed the buffalo while the Vultures have killed themselves eating the poisoned carcasses of sheep that had been intended to kill the coyotes: sheep herders have told me that they have seen many of the dead birds lying around the poisoned sheep, and I am told that with the revival of the sheep raising industry here, this great graceful bird which never perceptibly moves its wings will probably soon be extinct.

Did you ever know an owl to stay in confinement? I have a beautiful Snowy Owl that is very tame and shall hate to kill him.

Yours truly,

E. H. Frame.

Towne - E. B.
Hyer. 00, 1897

West Newton Jan. 1, 1900.

Wm. Brewster Esq.
Cambridge Mass.

My dear Sir: -

I have been in your debt on an exchange of skins for a long time and would like to square it up; and you have two skins of ours.

Please find herewith enclosed your memorandum of the trade.

I expect to take my family back to California to remain permanently, and my collection of skins is so bulky that I am going to dispose of a lot of stuff principally Cal. birds skins.

If you are in Cambridge this Winter, I would like to call upon you

some day about the middle of this month, and will take along with me a few skins which I would like to have you identify.

With the compliments of the season

I am Very Respectfully Yours,

E. B. Towne

Towne, E. B.
Jan. 1, 1900

West Newton Mass. Mch 30, 1900.

Wm. Brewster Esq.
Cambridge Mass.
Dear Sir:-

I have an idea that fright or concussion may and does cause albinism in birds, for the reason that during the three years that my Father, two brothers and myself collected several thousand birds in California, all the albinos we saw were taken in the same locality with one exception.

And strangely enough, we heard of one of these albinos in Santa Cruz Co. while we were several hundred miles farther South in this way.

My Father went from Santa Barbara over the Coast range by way of San Marcos toll road into the Santa Ynez valley hunting for a Calif. Condor that had been seen by a prospector a few days previous, among a flock of Buzzards that seemed to be holding a post mortem over the carcass of a dead deer.

The Santa Ynez is a hot dry uninhabited valley through which the river of same name runs, being at this point only a small shallow creek of alkaline water.

One morning my Father was greatly surprised at meeting a white man trout fishing who had come in from Santa Maria. He was an artist from New York, who had for several months been making a tour of the state, putting in most of his time fly fishing for trout, and having fallen into the creek and spoiled his matches, was very glad to meet

a person who could supply him with these necessities on a camping trip even though the thermometer was 114° in day time and the nights were wholly free from dew.
After telling fish and Condor stories they got down to Dippers, Cinclus Mexicanus, which little bird particularly interested the New Yorker from its peculiar habit of walking and feeding on bottom of creek under water, and sometimes emerging from water falls, and he told of having seen a white one on several different occasions while fishing the San Lorenzo river in the Santa Cruz Mountains.
Probably we took this identical bird several months later, and also the same day in the same locality an albanistic Western Winter Wren, T. hiemalis pacificus.
The next year we took another albino Dipper in same place.
Now as these two species are resident where they occur, and birds that range over a limited area, is it not natural to suppose that their noisy environment caused their unusual color? The Calif. Powder Mills, situated near where they were taken makes large quantities of smokeless powder for the Government and tests it at regular intervals each day in a large cannon which makes the whole cañon ring and shake for miles. The other instance I have referred to was a white Swalow that was hatched in the belfry of Santa Barbara Mission church where large bells are rung every day.
Perhaps you will recognize one of these birds as the one loned to you which you sent to Mr. R. Deane. However oddly come by, and whatever may have caused their variance from normal plumage, these skins seem to me to be very interesting, and I send them to you for inspection.

Very Respectfully,
E. Bancroft Towne.

Towne, E. B.
Mar. 30, 1900